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GLORIA MOLINA HONORS SKID ROW DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR HELPING GET 1,000 PEOPLE OFF STREETS

Approximately 700 Children, 300 Adults Receiving Services, Housing

LOS ANGELES (December 9, 2008)—Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina formally honored members of the county's Skid Row Demonstration Project at today's Board of Supervisors meeting for their success in helping get approximately 1,000 people off of downtown L.A.'s Skid Row streets.

"This project started out with a 'zero tolerance' policy for kids on Skid Row but has evolved into a mission to save families—and now we've established a model for how to do that," said Molina. "It's a tough job but if you surround a family with supportive services and move forward in partnership with the family, you can do it. Our goal has been to create a mechanism to help these families without being overly intrusive in their lives. We need to empower them to help them create their own unique solution. That's really key. And while the leadership of this project is here with us for this presentation, I also want to be sure and thank the front-line folks that are out there every single day."

Molina officially initiated her effort to help get children and families off of Skid Row in October 2005 when she directed the county's Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Mental Health (DMH), and Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to visit all Skid Row shelters and missions each business day to ensure that eligible families immediately began receiving public benefits to which they were entitled.

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In 2006, the county began contracting with the non-profit organization Beyond Shelter to directly administer the program and began working in conjunction with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to supply program participants with housing vouchers. When the county created the Department of Public Health in August 2006, it, too, began contributing to the project. Each Skid Row Demonstration Project team includes a DPSS homelessness case manager along with staff from DCFS, DHS, DMH, DPH, HACLA, and Beyond Shelter.

Molina's program requires that families living in Skid Row be provided with intensive case management and connected with an array of services, ranging from food stamps and hotel vouchers to mental health services and substance abuse treatment. It also requires that every child encountered by the team be assessed for DCFS intervention and appropriately referred; that eligible families be enrolled in the CalWORKs program; and that participants be provided with emergency, transitional, and permanent housing as soon as possible.

"After working in this field for over 30 years, to be able to partner with Los Angeles County and with HACLA has been an incredible experience because only with that kind of collaboration are we able to work with all the partners who impact these families' lives and help them directly," said Tanya Tull, president and CEO of Beyond Shelter. "From this project, we've developed a diversion model to keep people from going into Skid Row and to help those who do go there because they don't know a better way. In a civil society, we have to help those who can't take care of themselves, and I want to thank Supervisor Molina and everyone on this team for doing that."

To date, HACLA has supplied 300 housing vouchers and the county has spent \$9.6 million on the Skid Row Demonstration Project. As a result, at least 1,000 individuals—including approximately 700 children and 300 adults—are now off the streets of Skid Row.

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“When we first started this project, a lot of people accused us of criminalizing poverty but I hope they see now that our interest was in getting families on a more positive track,” Molina said. “We had to overcome the fear felt by Skid Row residents and even our own county employees that all we’d be doing was separating children from their parents. But our interest was always in preserving families. Now we’ve earned their trust and a good reputation by building a positive track record. Through our program, kids are better off. They’re out of Skid Row’s unsafe environment. Their parents are connected to jobs, services, and housing. The family is our focus.”

(Media interested in learning more about the City of Los Angeles’ contributions to the Skid Row Demonstration Project are encouraged to call Ms. Annie Kim, public information officer with the HACLA, at (213) 252-1864 (office) or (213) 880-4745 (cell). She can be reached via e-mail at annie.kim@hacla.org.)

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